

contents. This helps readers understand the author's purpose and thought, making the book essential reading for policy practitioners, diplomats, and anyone interested in Myanmar politics, foreign policy studies, and Asian international relations.

Overall, *Burmese Haze* is an impressive work that will enable readers to better understand the complex relationship between Myanmar and the United States.

Dulyapak Preecharush ดุลยภาค ปรีชารัชช

Southeast Asian Studies Program, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3443-2154>

References

- Clymer, Kenton. 2015. *A Delicate Relationship: The United States and Burma/Myanmar since 1945*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/cornell/9780801454486.001.0001>.
- Haass, Richard N. and O'Sullivan, Meghan L. 2000. Terms of Engagement: Alternatives to Punitive Policies. *Survival* 42(2): 113–135. <https://doi.org/10.1093/survival/42.2.113>.
- Steinberg, David I. 2010. The United States and Myanmar: A “Boutique Issue”? *International Affairs* 86(1): 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00874.x>.

Repossessing Shanland: Myanmar, Thailand, and a Nation-State Deferred

JANE M. FERGUSON

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021.

Since its independence in 1948, Myanmar has not experienced prolonged political stability either with respect to relations between ethnic groups or with respect to civil-military relations. One could argue that the civil war in Myanmar is perhaps the longest running in the world, with democratization never having been established in the country. The causes of ethnic conflict and democratization overlap in several ways. However, both are based on the same assumption: that the Myanmar army is the cause of the conflict, as any authoritarian regime poses an obstacle to peace. In the views of various ethnic groups, fighting against the Myanmar army is unavoidable. The conflict has forced people to join armed groups to fight against the Myanmar army for their own survival. The Shan people are one of the original ethnic groups of Myanmar, and they are familiar with several aspects of the ongoing conflict. This is because they were the leading group who signed the Panglong Agreement and who established the liberation army in the early years after Burma's independence from Britain in 1948. In the intense fighting of 1950 to 1980, Shan nationalists were severely suppressed, which compelled many of them to relocate to border areas. When Shan people crossed the border and settled in Thailand, they hoped to encounter their new home as a friendly state. However, they found themselves needing to assimilate into a challenging

political and social context. Further, they were unable to obtain Thai citizenship, which led to additional difficulties.

There are several modern academic works on the life of the Shan in Thailand, including those along the Thai-Myanmar border, focused on issues such as migration and ethnicity. Jane Ferguson, a scholar from the English-speaking world, has examined ethnic identity changes on the border and in the capitalist society of Thailand.

In the prologue of *Repossessing Shanland*, Ferguson emphasizes the historical background of Shanland. She notes that conflict and differing political views among the Shan people hinder political movements, preventing success. Understanding the history of political failures and their own true history will help the Shan people realize the need for unity to achieve freedom from the Myanmar state.

The book's introduction details how the Shan people gained political legitimacy while fighting for independence from Burma. It also describes the nature of Shan ethno-nationalism: the people, language, religion, and history. The introduction also attempts to clarify how ethnic identity can be studied during periods of conflict or war. It concludes that the study of Shan life along the border should look at cultural movement and assimilation rather than analyzing only Shan-ness. Shan people continue to fight against the Myanmar army while living along the border and in Thailand.

Chapter 1 explores various aspects of the history of the Shan. The critical thing to note here is that the Shan were the original ethnic group in Shan State before the British colonized the area. Shan race and ethnicity are linked with Thai and Lao race and ethnicity. In the view of nationalists, the Shan empire was prosperous and powerful until it tragically collapsed—not only due to its enemies but also at the hands of the Shan themselves. In other words, unity is a crucial aspect of the nationalist movement, and the Shan must prioritize it. In the colonial era the British allowed the Shan to govern their own area, officially called the Frontier Areas. Shan ethno-nationalists use this political history to point out that Shan State has never been governed by Burma. The Panglong Agreement is the guaranteed mechanism that carved out the precise territory of Shan State and was later marked as the source of the ethno-nationalist movement.

Chapter 2 emphasizes the context that changed the nature of the Shan elite in forming the nation-state. Aung San's death led to political instability in Myanmar. In the meantime, the emergence of a new Shan ethno-nationalist, Kwan Song, led to a new phase of the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) under his leadership. New technology was used as a crucial tool for spreading ethno-nationalism—along with Buddhism, which was incorporated as part of the ideology. Interestingly, the Cold War brought Shan people face to face with the world of capitalism, including the black market on their border. Chapter 3 presents the active role of the SURA in mobilizing language learning as a vital requirement for strengthening the nationalist movement and fostering unity. It can be said that the modernization of the printing industry was a crucial

factor in the education of the Shan people about their collective memories and the strength of their ethnic identity. Other facets of Shan identity were also formulated along the Thai-Myanmar border where the Shan ethno-nationalist movement was based, such as music and tattoos.

Chapter 4 explores the transitional periods of the Shan ethno-nationalist movement after the SURA was integrated as part of the Mong Tai Army (MTA). Although the military wing of the Shan armed groups was strengthened dramatically, the new leader, Khun Sa, was controversial, including being labeled a drug lord. His leadership tarnished the political image of the Shan movement. After Khun Sa's surrender to the Burmese army, factionalism arose among the Shan. Chapter 5 sheds light on the lives of the Shan people in Thailand, who experienced unexpected traumas even though the ethnic ties between Shan and Thai were very close. Because there was no Shan refugee camp and no official work permit system for Shan workers, Shan were exploited and hid their identity in order to survive in a capitalist society. The Shan State Army (SSA) was viewed as offering new hope for the Shan people, and many Shan came from Thailand to celebrate Shan National Day and support the SSA.

Chapter 6 discusses tourism growth in Thailand, including the growth of ethnic communities at tourist sites on the border. On the one hand, tourism that turned ethnic communities into tourist sites empowered Shan identity on the border; but on the other hand the same people had to assimilate themselves into the capitalist dynamic of Thailand. The everyday experiences of Shan are discussed to show that sometimes the narrative of the relationship between Shan and Thai-ness does not hold true in the real world.

Chapter 7 details the Shan's comparative cultural dynamic between living in Thailand and living in Burma. Although ethno-nationalism made an enemy of the Burmese, the Shan accepted Burmese culture in several ways, such as through music, while living in Thailand. Shan living in the border areas reflected on the past, when they enjoyed a good relationship with the Burmese. Thus, Burmese are not always seen as the enemy in Shan memory. Chapter 8 explores the fluidity of Shan identity on the border through the Poi Hsang Lawng festival. This festival is regarded as a must-see for tourists and is important for the Shan people to come and celebrate their religious identity. However, since the event is sponsored and supported by Thai officials, the Shan have to compromise and adapt their cultural identity and celebrations to fit with Thai nationalist discourse.

The conclusion emphasizes how Shan people can balance the relationship between the Thai state and the SSA. They continue to support the Shan nationalist movement indirectly and directly while supporting the work of Thai authorities on the border by working together as a community. With their ethno-nationalist efforts being challenged in many ways, the Shan are learning from history why their nation-state building project is not a success. The era of Sao Pha, SURA, and MTA is historically filled with tragedy. Cultural mechanisms can manifest in the form of traditional events and cultural activities. All such activities serve as markers to remember past events, and these memories and cultural elements can be used for political purposes.

Overall, this book makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Shan identity on the Thai-Burma border. However, two of its drawbacks must be highlighted: its limited field research and its limited discussion of the Shan ethno-nationalist movement.

First, the author uses the Shan community at Wan Kan Hai as a research site. This bases the book's arguments on an imprecise premise, because the research site and community do not represent the whole of the Shan community in Thailand. Of course, the main base of ethno-nationalists was in Wieng Hang District, Chiang Mai, during the era of the SURA, and all the SURA's political ideology was formulated there. But the reality is that other communities were equally representative of the rise of Shan ethno-nationalism during the MTA era (1985–96), especially Hin Theak Village in Chiang Rai Province. These two streams of ethno-nationalism (Shan United Army and MTA in Hin Theak Village and the SURA in Wieng Hang District) highlight the differences in the collective memory of the Shan people, mainly regarding the identity of the real hero in the contemporary period (Thitiwut 2017). The reborn Shan nationalist movement, known as the SSA, is actively supported by the former SURA as well as the MTA. At the Shan National Day festival in Loi Tai Lang well-known Shan traditional dances are showcased, with the performers including dancers from the Mae Sai area, which used to be a critical area controlled by Khun Sa. Hence, the book lacks a precise discussion of shared identity among the Shan communities along the border since it presents the perspective of only the SURA-supported area.

Second, there is the problem of how Shan ethno-nationalism emerged, as the book looks only at the core ideology formulated by the SURA. The reality is that there are many types of Shan nationalism in Shan State, depending on where ethno-nationalism was established. For example, if Shan ethno-nationalism was formulated on the China-Burma border, it had to accept the Communist ideology during the Cold War period. At present, there are two Shan ethno-nationalist movements: the Shan State Army–North/Shan State Progress Party (SSA/SSPP) and the Shan State Army–South/ Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS/SSA). These two groups have different ideologies and political positions. However, the author conducted research only in the area supporting the RCSS/SSA. It cannot be asserted that this group's ideology is the main ideology of the entire Shan people; there are other ideologies within the SSA/SSPP group. Indeed, the two groups have fought each other politically and strategically even though they are both Shan. Thus, the RCSS wields power only in its interaction with specific Shan communities on the Thai-Burmese border, not in the whole of Shan State.

Shan support different sides for political mobilization in ethnic armed groups. For instance, many Shan people support the United Wa State Army and the National Democratic Alliance Army. Interestingly, both groups' supporters also work in Thailand. Therefore, at this point it cannot be concluded that all Shan workers support the RCSS/SSA. As such, the hybridity of Shan immigrant community workers and ethnic identification is complex, particularly in Thai capitalist society.

Thitiwut Boonyawongwiwat

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Political Science and

Public Administration, Chiang Mai University

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7584-1201>

References

Thitiwut Boonyawongwiwat 2017. *The Ethno-Narcotic Politics of the Shan People: Fighting with Drugs, Fighting for the Nation on the Thai–Burmese Border*. London: Lexington Books.

Systemic Silencing: Activism, Memory, and Sexual Violence in Indonesia

KATHARINE E. MCGREGOR

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2023.

The issue of “comfort women” is about the history of sexual violence and Japan’s military-enforced slavery system in Asia. At the same time, it touches on issues of nationalism, Japan’s imperial past, and the politics of historical remembering. Therefore, it has been a major topic of diplomacy and social/transnational activism involving Japan, Korea, and beyond; and for a long time it has been an important research area in both the modern and contemporary history of East Asia and beyond. Kevin Blackburn’s *The Comfort Women of Singapore in History and Memory* (2022) added long-awaited research into the scholarship on comfort women from Singapore and contributed to the wider scholarship on comfort women studies. In 2023, following in the footsteps of Blackburn’s brilliant work, Katharine E. McGregor in her *Systemic Silencing: Activism, Memory, and Sexual Violence in Indonesia* takes up the more formidable task of coming to grips with the past of highly marginalized groups—*rōmusha* (laborers), *heiho* (auxiliary soldiers), and, most prominently, *ianfu* (comfort women)—thereby offering the first sustained analysis of the Indonesian comfort women system that was silenced in the *long durée* of Indonesian colonial and postcolonial history. By skillfully situating sexual violence and the human rights movement in the broader context of transnational activism and memory, McGregor breaks new ground in adding much to our understanding of the complex vicissitudes of comfort women—not only in Indonesia but also in Korea, Japan, the Netherlands, and more.

McGregor carefully periodizes more than a century of Indonesian history and deftly arranges the book into different themes against a backdrop of major historical events or movements. Aside from an introduction and a rather short conclusion, the book unfolds in nine chapters. Chapter 1 traces the long history of sexual exploitation of women in Indonesia and Japan. It further examines how women and children became a matter of international concern due to trafficking and explores